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## From Threshold to Network: Theoretical Overview of the Transformation of Liminality Across Contexts

### Introduction

Since its introduction by the French ethnologist Arnold van Gennep in 1909 and further development by the British anthropologist Victor Turner, liminality has undergone a significant transformation<sup>1</sup>. It originally referred to the middle stage of the tripartite model of rites of passages (separation, transition, reincorporation), which van Gennep defined as “rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age” (Turner, 1969, p. 359). Now, liminality is present in myriad branches of sciences: from sociology, psychology, history, religious studies and theology, to political, cultural, literary, media and performance studies, as well as neurobiology and behavioral studies (Graham, 2008, p. 2.), in which it has not only gained new meanings and purposes, but also should be considered – as argued by Bjørn Thomassen – “a master concept”<sup>2</sup> that is crucial for understanding a wide range of currently occurring phenomena which are inseparably linked with constant changes, uncertainties, contingencies and life crises (Horvath, Thomassen, Wydra, 2015, p. 39).

Beyond the academic discourse, the term “liminality”<sup>3</sup> is either unfamiliar or associated with a highly scientific and technical concept, which sounds as though it were

<sup>1</sup> The adjective “liminal” was already known and utilized by antient philosophers, such as Plato. For more information, see JOSEPH M., *Liminality* [in:] Nel P., (ed.), *Keywords for Children's Literature*, NYU Press, 2021, pp. 116–19., or Szakolczai A., *Liminality and Experience: Structuring Transitory Situations and Transformative Events* [in:] Horvath A., Thomassen B., Wydra H., (eds.), *Breaking Boundaries: Varieties of Liminality*, Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2015, pp. 11–38.

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, however, when I am writing this passage in the year 2024, the word “liminality” and its derivatives are not even recognized by Microsoft Word. The wildly used word processor underlines the liminal-related terms with a red zigzag, signaling that it is not familiar with liminality.

<sup>3</sup> From the Latin word “limen” meaning “threshold”.

reserved solely for scholars. Yet, it could not be further from the truth. Liminality is experienced in everyday life when, for various reasons, one detaches from routines, stability, the familiar and the predictable. Liminality can constitute a collective or individual experience. Some illustrations of the first case could be time of war (see Mälksoo, 2012, pp. 481–94)<sup>4</sup>, when the collective refers to an entire nation, or a sauna experience in Finland, which involves regular gatherings of a limited number of people in one place “...where they [the sauna users] don’t have to worry about how they look, and where everyone is equal and stripped of status” (Bryant, 2023). As regards single individuals, liminality can entail not only deeply intimate experiences such as being in psychotherapy, going through divorce, or pregnancy, but also more everyday-life situations like a break from one’s daily routines and responsibilities (Engelke, 2008, p. 284)<sup>5</sup>, for example, reading a book or watching a film. Regardless of the severity of the experiences being undergone, as again Thomassen states, “Human existence without liminality is simply not possible. Social life would be void without it” (Horvath, Thomassen, Wydra, 2015, p. 40).

The aim of this article is to provide a theoretically grounded exploration of the concept of liminality, tracing its evolution from Arnold van Gennep’s foundational anthropological work, through Victor Turner’s elaborations, to a contemporary approach, including Jon McKenzie’s formulation of the liminautic in the context of the digital age. By revisiting the core theories and applying them to current digital ecologies, this essay seeks to fill a critical gap in approaching liminality from a broader perspective. Thus, the paper offers a cohesive theoretical framework for understanding how liminality – with its remarkable adaptability – operates as a continuously altering cultural condition in both analogue and digital contexts.

### **Arnold van Gennep and Ritual Roots of Liminality**

In his *Rites de Passage* (*Rites of Passage* from now on), Arnold van Gennep (1873–1957) not so much introduced the notion of rites of passage into anthropology as elaborated on them and demonstrated that they happen according to a specific pattern. The monograph in question was originally published in French in 1909 and was not translated into English until fifty-one years later. Van Gennep himself perceived his publication as a groundbreaking achievement stemming from a sudden insight:

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<sup>4</sup> For an extensive discussion on wartime as a liminal period.

<sup>5</sup> A pause as a liminal situation was already recognized by Edith Turner – Victor Turner’s wife – who contributed significantly to the anthropologist’s research, seminars, articles and monographs. The Turners would hold seminars in their house on a regular basis. During those seminars they developed a liminal system. In *An Interview with Edith Turner*, she recalls, “Somebody gave a presentation – this was the structured part. Then the interval, the liminal time, when we all got cans of beer and had a break. Then we came together afterwards for the “reaggregation,” to say more in what we’d been talking about in the beer interval”.

"I confess sincerely that though I set little store by my other books, my *Rites de Passage* is like a part of my flesh, and was the result of a kind of inner illumination that suddenly dispelled a sort of darkness in which I had been floundering for almost ten years" (Horvath, Thomassen, Wydra, 2015, p. 42). Until the year 1960, however, he had not gained greater academic recognition<sup>6</sup>.

In many respects, van Gennep was himself a transitional figure. Both his personal and professional lives were marked by transits. With the name of a Dutch origin, a German birthplace, his move to France (with his divorced mother) and his fascination with the Arab world, van Gennep experienced liminality numerous times. On top of that, as a scholar, not only was he constantly pursuing academic recognition<sup>7</sup>, but also struggling with being marginalized by others<sup>8</sup>. His greatest follower, Victor Turner, would probably have characterized van Gennep's life as being betwixt and between socially recognized positions (Neumann, 2012, p. 473).

Undoubtedly, Arnold van Gennep's *Rites of Passage* was his greatest work, which today is considered a classic. His analysis of ceremonies accompanying an individual's "life crises" begins with a classification of all existing rites, among which he found rites of passage the most important. In this respect, highlighting the significance of transitions in all societies, van Gennep labeled rites of passage as "a special category" (Van Gennep, 1960, p. 10) and categorized them into three subgroups: rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation. However, at the same time, the ethnologist pointed out that these three subcategories are not developed to the same extent by all societies or in all ceremonies. He writes,

Rites of separation are prominent in funeral ceremonies, rites of incorporation at marriages. Transition rites may play an important part, for instance, in pregnancy, betrothal, and initiation; or they may be reduced to a minimum in adoption, in the delivery of a second child, in remarriage, or in the passage from the second to the third age group. Thus, although a complete scheme of rites of passage theoretically includes preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation), in specific instances these three types are not always equally important or equally elaborated (Van Gennep, 1960, p. 11).

<sup>6</sup> Not only had he never obtained a position at a French university (despite having authored more than four hundred publications), but he was also neglected by the scholars whose academic statuses were well-established and whose monographs were in the same tradition of French sociology as van Gennep's. The scholars in question were Émile Durkheim, the author of *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912), A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, the author of *The Andaman Islanders* (1922), and W. Lloyd Warner, the author of *A Black Civilization* (1937).

<sup>7</sup> The sole academic position van Gennep ever received was the (first) chair in Swiss ethnography at the University of Neuchâtel, which he took in 1912. Three years later he was expelled from Switzerland because he openly criticized the Swiss government for supporting the Germans during the war. Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>8</sup> There were, indeed, some prominent anthropologists who would discuss *Rites of Passage* before its translation in 1960, namely Paul Radin and Claude Lévi-Strauss who had already recognized the value of van Gennep's early work in his book on totemism. Ibid., pp. 43-44.

What seems to be important in the quote above, apart from the fact that it provides an overall picture of the triadic model of rites of passage, is van Gennep's reference to the middle stage of a rite of passage as the liminal period, transition rites as liminal rites and rites of incorporation as postliminal rites. In this particular fragment of the work, the author uses the term "liminal" for the first time. Interestingly, he does not explain the meaning of the word either in the text or in the footnotes. Instead, he simply uses the term "transitional" synonymously to "liminal"<sup>9</sup> and explains:

Whoever passes from one to the other finds himself physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds. It is this situation which I have designated a transition, and one of the purposes of this book is to demonstrate that this symbolic and spatial area of transition may be found in more or less pronounced form in all the ceremonies which accompany the passage from one social and magico-religious position to another (Van Gennep, 1960, p. 12).

Van Gennep's primary focus is on the distinction between the particular rites. He does not seem to pay much attention to the terminology. Using the word "liminal" interchangeably with "transitional", he explains the latter as "wavering between two worlds" and describes transitional/liminal in the same way Victor Turner defines liminality almost sixty years later, in his 1967 book *The Forest of Symbols*: "being betwixt and between".

Birth, puberty, marriage, and death are, in the majority of cultures, marked by ceremonies which may vary in detail but are universal in function. Arnold van Gennep was the first ethnologist to note the regularity and significance of the rituals associated with the transitional stages in human life, and his term for these, "rites of passage," has become a part of the language of not only anthropology and sociology but also other scientific disciplines. In his work, van Gennep shows that rites of passage can act at both individual and collective levels, which seems essential especially in the twenty-first century, when various cultural phenomena are being studied from different perspectives. Even though van Gennep's work (and he himself) was criticized by several authors,<sup>10</sup> and *Rites of Passage* does not provide clear definitions or structured terminology, van Gennep's insight laid the foundation for not only Victor Turner's research but also numerous subsequent scholars. It seems that, when extricating liminal phase from the rites of passage, van Gennep did sufficiently to inspire understanding liminal experiences as the ones which lead to personal transformations, group formations and all sorts of social changes.

<sup>9</sup> In the index of *The Rites of Passage*, the reader is told to see the word *transitional* instead of *liminal*.

<sup>10</sup> Van Gennep was criticized for taking too broad an approach to the subject of rites of passage. Marcel Mauss, for example, claims that "van Gennep sees rites of passage everywhere". BUCHOWSKI M., *Magia i rytuał*, Warszawa, Instytut Kultury, 1993, p. 136. Edmund Leach considers van Gennep's theory as reductionist and applicable to any ritual process. Buchowski M., *Antropologia Społeczna Edmunda Leacha* [in:] Leach E. and Greimas A. J., (eds.) *Rytuał i Narracja*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1989, p. 16.

## Turnerian Liminality and Liminoid

Victor Turner (1920–1983) initially became interested in the concept of liminality (Thomassen, 2015, p. 46)<sup>11</sup> while experiencing a pivotal moment in his personal and professional life. While awaiting his postponed American visa application in the summer of 1963, he encountered Arnold van Gennep's *Rites of Passage* (Turner, 1985, p. 7)<sup>12</sup>, which he instantly recognized as significant. Feeling inspired, he began drafting his famous paper "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage," which was published in 1967 in *The Forest of Symbols*. This work, presented in the United States in March 1964, marked the beginning of his long-lasting studies of the concept of liminality, seen not only as one of the stages of the rites of passage, but also as a "realm of pure possibility" (Graham, 2008, p. 5).

In a number of Turner's papers that discuss liminality, he provides multiple definitions of this concept. His basic and probably the most concise one refers to liminality as a state of "being betwixt and between", "when the past is momentarily negated, suspended, or abrogated, and the future has not yet begun, an instant of pure potentiality when everything, as it were, trembles in the balance" (Turner, 1982, p. 44). However, the way Turner elaborates on the idea creates conditions for understanding liminality on a deeper (out-of-ritual-context) level. First and foremost, Turner conceptualizes liminality as an ambiguous situation, based on the paradoxical coexistence of both destruction and creation. He writes:

Liminality is, of course, an ambiguous state, for social structure, while it inhibits full social satisfaction, gives a measure of finiteness and security; liminality may be for many the acme of insecurity, the breakthrough of chaos into cosmos, of disorder into order, than the milieu of creative interhuman or transhuman satisfactions and achievements. Liminality may be the scene of disease, despair, death, suicide, the breakdown without compensatory replacement of normative, well-defined social ties and bonds (Turner, 1982, p. 46).

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<sup>11</sup> Prior to discovering anthropology during the Second World War, Turner had studied literature at University College, London. During the war, he was drafted into the army. Performing various non-combatant work, Turner had both time and space to read. After exploring the books of Margaret Mead and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, his interest shifted from poetry and classics into anthropology (Engelke 276), which eventually led Turner to enter the Manchester School of British Social Anthropology. Here, he not only completed his PhD, but also started his lifelong study on the rituals of Ndembu people of northwestern Zambia. His analyses of the African tribe resulted in transferring liminality from the study of ritual passages in small-scale societies to broader sociocultural contexts. In his ethnographic accounts, Turner drew parallels between tribal and modern societies, sensing that the dynamics he observed among the Ndembu had broader relevance. He argued that liminality not only underscores the significance of transitional periods but also illuminates human responses to such experiences, highlighting their role in shaping personality.

<sup>12</sup> At that time, Turner and his family were living in Hastings on the English Channel in a state of liminal uncertainty, having resigned from his position at Manchester, sold their house, and entered a period of transition. As Edith Turner later described, they were literally at a threshold, living "in a state of suspense".

In this passage, Turner recognizes the darker dimensions of liminality, which can induce psychological and social instability, leading to alienation, despair, or even collapse. However, in yet another fragment he demonstrates the transformative power of liminality and hence its positive impact on individuals or societies:

Undoing, dissolution, decomposition are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the reformulation of old elements in new patterns. (...) This coincidence of opposite processes and notions in a single representation characterizes the peculiar unity of the liminal: that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both (Turner, 1967, p. 341).

The quotation exemplifies the fundamental nature of liminality as a moment of both disintegration and reintegration, and as such for adapting and evolving in response to changing circumstances, which also aligns with the constantly changing conditions of the twenty-first century.

Turner liberated the concept from the rigid frames of rituals and anthropology. Perhaps he did so because scholarly he came from humanities (Turner, 1990, p. 167).<sup>13</sup> and hence he was able to discern in liminality the potential other scholars could not. He states:

For in these modern processes and movements, the seeds of cultural transformation, discontent with the way things are culturally, and social criticism, always implicit in the preindustrially liminal, have become situationally central, no longer a matter of the interface between “fixed structures” but the matter of the holistically developmental. Thus revolutions, whether successful or not, become the *limina*, with all their initiatory overtones, between major distinctive structural forms or orderings of society. It may be that this is to use “liminal” in a metaphorical, not in the “primary” or “literal” sense advocated by van Gennep, but this usage may help us to think about global human society, to which all specific historical social formations may well be converging. Revolutions, whether violent or non-violent may be the totalizing liminal phases for which the *limina* of tribal *rites the passage* were merely foreshadowings or premonitions (Turner, 1982, p. 45).

Turner extends the concept of liminality beyond the ritual context to the realm of global social transformations, and as such, proposes a holistic approach to it. Also, he argues that the metaphorical usage of liminality enables a broader understanding of human societies’ trajectories, which turns out to be applicable for multiple disciplines.

<sup>13</sup> Turner’s exposition to literature allowed him to see and study liminality from various perspectives. Edith Turner admits that her husband “had subconsciously recognized rites of passage in the shipwreck on Caliban’s Island, in Rosalind’s sojourn in the forest of Arden, in the quest for the whale, Moby Dick, in the passage from guilt to redemption in *Crime and Punishment*, in Oedipus at Colonus. . . . In the journey of the Pandava brothers in the *Mahabharata*, in Sita’s kidnapping and rescue in *Ramayana*, in Tolkien’s quest for the ring, in C. S. Lewis’s Narnia, in Jack Kerouac and his beats in *On the Road*, in unending passage from one place to another in many of the No plays of Japan, each enacting the passage through violent earthly concerns to Nirvana— let alone *Mary Poppins* and countless children’s stories with the theme of passage to adulthood”.

Furthermore, in his famous seminal essay “Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow and Ritual” (1982 [originally 1974]), Turner offered a significant elaboration that expanded the theoretical scope of liminality. He suggested that liminal experiences in modern consumerist societies need to be distinguished from obligatory, collective ritual actions of premodernity. Hence, he coined the term “liminoid” (Turner, 1982, p. 64)<sup>14</sup>. According to Turner, liminoid moments are experienced in art, sport, leisure, and other creative activities, and reflect a shift from collective ritual to individual exploration of creativity and uncertainty. The ideas Turner articulated in “Liminal to Liminoid...” had far-reaching implications both within anthropology and in interdisciplinary studies. His students and other scholars drew upon his theories to examine, *inter alia*, art, theater, literature, media and leisure as manifestations of liminoid phenomena. The “performative turn” in anthropology during the 1980s and 1990s further cemented Turner’s status as a central figure in studies of process and performance – concepts that had always been integral to his work (Stephenson, 2020, p. 33).

In spite of Turner’s tremendous contribution not only to anthropology but also to other disciplines, he did not escape criticism. For example, Robert Horton argues that the anthropologist overemphasized the connection between rituals and religious spheres, neglecting secular rituals (Szyjewski, 2006, p. 1)<sup>15</sup>, whereas Thomassen warns against adopting Turner’s point that liminality represents “a realm of pure possibility” from which novel configurations of ideas and relationships emerge since such assertions risk overstating the generative potential of liminality at the expense of structural constraints. Thomassen critiques this approach as a preference rather than an empirical observation, cautioning that it inadvertently casts structural assertions as subordinate to liminal processes (Stephenson, 2020, p. 17). Grimmes<sup>16</sup> reproaches Turner for the assertion that authentic ritual is the one that transforms. In his view, not all rites must transform, their purposes and outcomes may vary. He writes that

We cannot assume that rites transform any more than we can assume they conserve. In my view the most vexing problem in Turner’s theory of ritual is not his dramatism (as some have claimed) but his “transformationism,” the ideological assumption that rites, by definition, transform. Some do; some do not. Which do and which do not should be a matter of observation, not of definition (Stephenson, 2020, p. 7).

The arguments presented above seem compelling and showcase that Turner transformed liminality into a key analytical concept that transcended its original anthropological context. While his emphasis on the creative and transformative aspects of liminality inspired significant scholarly advancements, critical engagement with his

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<sup>14</sup> The “-oid” here derives from Greek *-eidos*, a form, shape, and means “like, resembling”; “liminoid” *resembles* without being identical with “liminal”.

<sup>15</sup> In the late 1950s, Turner joined the Catholic Church, which presumably influenced his studies.

<sup>16</sup> One of Turner’s students.

work highlights the need for a balanced perspective that integrates both liminality and structure. Turner's legacy thus lies not only in his theoretical innovations but also in the ongoing dialogue his work continues to provoke.

### **Beyond Anthropology: Contemporary Approach to Liminality**

The initial articulation of the concept of the liminal done by van Gennep and then its rediscovery and further development by Turner led to the broad expansion of the idea across a wide range of scholarly disciplines (Graham, 2008, p. 15)<sup>17</sup>. Consequently, liminality has been subject to various definitions and interpretations. Lisa Tsaliki, for instance, describes liminality as "a legitimized situation of freedom from cultural constraints and social classifications" (Tsaliki, 1968, p. 581), stressing its potential for breaking it free from normative structures. Stefan Brandt emphasizes how liminality is strongly linked to a change; he writes that "[l]iminality tries to capture the permanent inescapability of transitions and the existential as well as cultural consequences of such destabilizations. In other words, liminality tries to explain change by dense descriptions of boundary crossings" (Brandt, 2017, p. 14). Stenner underscores the role of suspension of existing limits during liminal experiences, as they facilitate novelty and transformation. He argues that "(...) a liminal experience, in a nutshell, involves a temporary suspension of limits that permits a transition to a new set of limits. For this reason, liminality concerns the emergence of novelty just at the moment in which 'something' is in the process of becoming" (Stenner, 2021, p. 3). He also provides a simple definition of liminality, which resembles Turnerian "between and betwixt" or "neither here nor there" explanation of the concept, namely: "The reality of the liminal is there when the limits that had defined the prior order are suspended and no longer apply, and when the limits that will define the order to come have not yet taken their place" (Stenner, 2021, p. 8).

Apart from providing comprehensive definitions of liminality, Stenner also refers to the so-called liminal spaces, which have been commonly used and analyzed by scholars as regards the spaces of borders, membranes, doors, meeting points, airports, or some other places at the edge or "in between" structures. The assumption is that these spaces are considered liminal. Stenner claims that even though generally accepted and valuable when utilized with analytical rigor, the concept of liminal space remains a simplification. When liminality is perceived as liminal space it has already been contained, ordered, and tamed, which stands in contradiction to the very nature of liminality. There is nothing inherently liminal about thresholds, borders, frontiers,

<sup>17</sup> A vast number of researchers have studied liminality in, for example, illness (Dumit 2005), consulting activity (Czarniawska and Mazza 2003), narrative genres (Ashley 1990), sex (Moore 2003), "media events" (Dayan and Katz 1992), and sites of media production (Couldry 2000), in consumption behavior and shopping malls (Zukin 1991, and Cusack and Digance this volume), and in the cybercommunication of digitally virtual spaces (Shields 2003; Barbatsis, Fegan, and Hansen 1999; Sant 2001).

margins, and so forth. What may or may not be described as liminal must include the experience of passage or movement across such a threshold, and its management (Stenner, 2021, p. 22–23).

Stenner's insight underscores the risk of oversimplifications in contemporary applications of liminality, where the term is often employed loosely to describe any transitional or marginal phenomenon without fully accounting for the processual nature of liminal experience. However, it seems that by the time a completely new expression is coined, liminality will be used to describe any transitional moments. Provisionally, as Thomassen claims, "[l]iminality is indeed an irreplaceable term for the analysis of transition and social and political transformation. Decisive events and formative ideas tend to take shape in figurations that are both spatially and temporally liminal" (Thomassen, 2024, p. 43). The scholar does not see any other term which could contain all the meanings hidden in liminality – as understood today. What is more, through the course of his studies, Thomassen went as far as to argue that liminality ought to be regarded as a "master concept" through which all that the term connotes – a position of marginality, critical subversion of rules and norms, transgression, generative creativity, parody and satire, fusion experiences – are unquestionably taken as inherently positive socio-cultural goods. To him "[l]iminality is not just any concept, but a concept with which to think, and it points toward a certain kind of interpretative analysis of events and experiences. Liminality does not and cannot "explain" (Thomassen, 2015, p. 42).

In addressing the concept of liminality from contemporary perspective, it seems essential to acknowledge that modern life unfolds within the framework of an increasingly digitalized environment, in which liminality assumes new forms and, to a certain extent, needs to be redefined. In the digital era, traditional boundaries between particular spheres of life, such as work and play, public and private, real and virtual, are dissolving, prompting a reconfiguration of liminality as originally conceived by van Gennep and Turner. Rather than existing as discrete moments of transition, in digital reality liminal experiences have become continuous, fluid, ephemeral, and networked. To be relevant in the context of the digitalized discourses and experiences, Jon McKenzie even coined a new term, namely "liminautic", and explains that

at the turn of the twenty-first century, the citationality of discourses and practices is passing across an electronic threshold, a digital limen. Words and gesture, statements and behaviors, symbolic systems, and living bodies are being recorded, archived, and recombined through multimedia communication networks. Liminal and liminoid genres are becoming cyberspatial, flighty, liminautic (McKenzie, 2001, p. 94).

McKenzie's observation captures a pivotal moment in the evolution of liminality, highlighting how the digital age reshapes both the content of cultural production and the modes through which meaning is experienced. His notion of the "digital limen" underscores the threshold-like quality of contemporary media environments, in which the majority of modern societies function on a regular basis.

## Conclusion

Despite McKenzie's proposal of the term "liminautic" to capture the digital character of contemporary thresholds, and despite Turner's prior introduction of the term "liminoid" to distinguish leisure-oriented experiences from the communally structured liminal moments identified by van Gennep, the term "liminality" still remains the dominant concept in academic discourse, which serves as a powerful analytical tool for exploring states of transition, ambiguity and transformation across disciplines. While the terms "liminoid" and "liminautic" offer valuable refinements, people of academia frequently choose to subsume these under the broader umbrella of "liminality", which now functions less as a rigid anthropological category and more as a dynamic, heuristic framework for analyzing in-between states across both physical and digital spaces. One may call it an oversimplification. However, liminality in its core "transgresses boundaries, it goes where it is not expected to be. It is inherently 'in between' and therefore cannot be pinned down or located exactly" (Schechner, 1998, p. 360), and if so, it seems that any attempts to make alterations within the terminology turn out to be more of a novelty or trivia than a genuinely adopted new form of the term "liminality" embraced by the majority of scholars. In this vein, it seems that the term tries to escape from being put into frames and in this respect, it resembles the experiences it describes – it is elusive. Thus, it can be concluded that liminality itself is in liminal phase.

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### From Threshold to Network: Theoretical Overview of the Transformation of Liminality Across Contexts

**Abstract:** This article traces the evolution of liminality from Arnold van Gennep's foundational anthropological work, through Victor Turner's elaborations, to Bjørn Thomassen's critical reappraisal and Jon McKenzie's formulation of the liminautic in the context of the

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digital age. While alternative terms such as Turner's liminoid – referring to individualized, leisure-based experiences – and McKenzie's liminautic – describing digitally mediated and networked thresholds – have expanded the conceptual terrain, the term “liminality” continues to dominate scholarly discourse across disciplines. This persistence can be attributed to the concept's remarkable adaptability and its capacity to describe complex, transitional states in both analogue and digital contexts. However, this very adaptability renders liminality conceptually elusive, as it resists fixed definitions and tends to migrate across disciplinary and methodological boundaries.

**Keywords:** liminality, Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner, Bjørn Thomassen, Jon McKenzie

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